

THE CHOSEN PEOPLE



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JULY 2020



ISRAEL

SERVING THE JEWISH PEOPLE
EVEN IN TIMES OF ISOLATION

FROM THE PRESIDENT



CHOSEN PEOPLE MINISTRIES' REPORT

“We continue to reach Jewish people with the gospel.”

Dear friends,

Shalom in His grace! Thanks again for taking the time to read the Chosen People Ministries newsletter and to pray for our ministry. Your partnership is vital to us.

We are ready to move forward! Your Mission to the Jewish People is cautiously reopening our congregations, facilities, and in-person ministries around the globe. Because of this dramatic pause, we were able to take a breath and allow the Lord to show us some new ways to carry out our ministry and even to reorder our priorities. We are often so busy, but because of the pandemic, we were able to focus more on the Lord, our families, and allow an even deeper love for our Messiah, Jesus, to fill our hearts.

I cannot tell you how much I have appreciated the valuable lessons I have learned through this wandering through the wilderness! I am glad it is not forty years in the desert, but the Lord did use that time in the lives of the children of Israel to form my ancestors as a nation. I now have a better understanding of what my forefathers endured and how valuable these times can be for our growth and spiritual transformation.

Let me take a few moments to reflect on the journey of Chosen People Ministries through the past year.

Celebration of our 125th Anniversary

I never expected that in the months following the joy-filled 125th-anniversary celebration of our ministry, we would travel from the highest mountaintop to the lowest plane in such a short time. The changes from July 2019 to June 2020 are head-spinning!

If you recall, Chosen People Ministries was founded in 1894 by Leopold Cohn, a Hungarian rabbi who accepted Jesus on the Lower East Side of Manhattan in 1892. In 2019, we honored our wonderful heritage by doing what we have done for years—evangelism and Bible teaching from a Jewish perspective.

We hosted Bible conferences in Charlotte, North Carolina (February 23, 2019); Orange County, California (March 29–30); Sandy Cove, Maryland (May 31–June 2); and in the Midwest in Lake Lawn, Wisconsin (October 9–17). We held our most extensive street outreach ever in New York City (July 27–August 10).

Finally, we sponsored a Chosen People Ministries Heritage Tour in New York City (November 13–15, 2019), culminating in a celebration banquet at the Grand Prospect Hall in Brooklyn (November 15).

We held one additional event at our Brooklyn Center in December (December 4–6, 2019), which could be one of the most important events of our 125th year. Three non-Messianic Jewish scholars, along with some of our staff, presented historical papers on the *Life and Times of Leopold Cohn*. Imagine three Jewish scholars who are not believers in Jesus dialoguing with us on the founding of Chosen People Ministries!



The Impact of COVID-19 on Chosen People Ministries

The coronavirus took me and everyone else by surprise. As you know, COVID-19 hit New York City very hard!

At the beginning of March, I was all set to travel to the Holy Land. I began getting phone calls from friends and staff there, telling me that Israel was very concerned about the spread of the virus and that it looked like people who had been in Europe were going to be quarantined upon their return. One of our staff members had this experience because of travel to Europe. Since I planned to fly through London, and I would only be in Israel for a couple of days, it became evident that the trip was ill-fated! So, unfortunately, I had to cancel the trip.

During the week of March 9, we began to see major cities going into a never-before-experienced lockdown, starting with Seattle and then San Francisco.

On March 15, our governor closed the restaurants and bars in New York. I knew that our day was about to come, and so, on Sunday night, March 15, I sent an emergency text to our entire staff and told them not to come in on Monday, March 16. Why risk another week of subway travel? Within a few days, we also closed down our Florida office and moved our Feinberg Brooklyn-based training program online.

Most of us still had little idea of how the virus would impact New York City and our ministry, the economy, and lifestyle in general. Thankfully, we were already using Zoom extensively for evangelism and discipleship in both the United States and Israel. As a result, we were able to switch to digital technology very quickly for most of our communications. By mid-March, we had moved all of our services, Bible studies, and various meetings to the Zoom platform.

I am happy to say that our beloved administrative staff made a smooth transition to working from home. We established a very structured week, beginning each day with a prayer meeting on Zoom, and then ending each day with closing prayer at 4:45 PM. These gatherings became a great way to help those not used to working from home get to work, and end the workday at 5:00 PM to help them create a division between work and personal life. These prayer meetings continue to unite us spiritually as we share personal prayer requests and get to know one another better than ever before.

We have conducted a series of well-attended Bible conferences and other online events. We shared the Messiah in the Passover online with more than 2,000 people!

I am sorry to say that almost 600 meetings in churches were canceled. We were disappointed to lose these meetings as many Christians bring their not-yet-believing Jewish friends to hear us.

So What Have We Learned?

Jewish people have proven to be more open to the gospel because of the pandemic. One Jewish man came to faith through one of our first online services at our Brooklyn congregation. We have also had several other Jewish people come to the Lord as a result of our ongoing evangelistic campaigns over the web. This past month, we had one Jewish woman accept the Lord in America and another man in Israel, where we continue our online campaigns.

We look forward to gradually reopening. We expect to be back in our Manhattan, Florida, and Brooklyn offices by August. We also anticipate our services and Bible studies to resume in-person meetings slowly. We understand that our national recovery will vary depending on the area. We might not be through it, but we can better manage our relationship with this insidious, invisible enemy.

Your prayers for Chosen People Ministries mean a lot. We hope you can give generously during this summer season since the summers are usually financially challenging for most ministries and churches.

Whatever you can give today will make a significant impact as we continue to reach Jewish people with the gospel. So far, we have not had to cut our staff. Thank God, we can pay our bills and continue our work in the United States and especially in Israel!

This season has also reminded us that online ministries are a great way to reach Jewish people for Jesus. Jewish people like the anonymity of considering Jesus without their family or friends knowing what they are doing. We are using about a half-dozen outreach websites. For example, we receive hundreds of requests from Israelis each month through our Facebook ads for our *Isaiah 53 Explained* books, both in Hebrew and Russian! Our wonderful staff in Israel are ready and available to follow up. You will read more about what is happening in Israel for the gospel in the rest of the newsletter.

We have had well over a million people watch our testimony videos on the www.Ifoundshalom.com site and through various social media pages during the last twelve months. We also increased our missionary staff and volunteers, and the congregations we sponsor are growing, too! Most of them had far more people attending their services through Zoom than in person and will continue to actively promote their online services in the days ahead!

We also learned the high value of spending more time with those we love. When you are unable

to be near your children, friends, parents, and grandchildren due to mandatory quarantine and for health reasons, you begin to appreciate them more. The same goes for our church members and fellow servants of the Lord.

I know I will never be the same. I will move a little slower and try to spend more time with those I love, including the Jewish people to whom I have a ministry.

Enjoy the rest of the newsletter, and thank you for your prayers and generous support, which has enabled us to reach this point. We are ready for what comes next and look forward in hope to the remainder of our 126th year of ministry and beyond.

Your brother in the Messiah,



Mitch



Israeli Facebook ad offering *Isaiah 53 Explained* in Hebrew.



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ISRAEL UPDATE: LIVES INTERRUPTED FOR GOD’S PURPOSE

In early March, exuberance was everywhere. We were going about our business as usual: Going to work, taking our loved ones out to dinner, enjoying the latest Academy Award nominees at the theater, and so on. And then it was gone. Almost overnight, everything stopped.

We found ourselves trying to figure out the difference between an “essential” and a “non-essential” business. Even more importantly, we were trying to figure out how to keep food on the table and a roof over our heads. For some, we had to learn how to be alone.

Even worship services were interrupted—arguably the most essential activity that exists was not allowed to continue. And yet, the gospel still needed to go forth. In the face of a pandemic, complete with quarantine, self-isolation, and, in many cases, absolute lockdown, the message of hope and salvation in Jesus had to be proclaimed.

“Jesus the Messiah is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8), and His message is eternal. Yet our evangelism—the mode of communicating the gospel—has changed with the times. We are no longer limited to *only* meeting face to face. We have learned how to leverage the digital tools God has provided to layer our personal touches and in-person evangelism with online Bible studies, personal discipleship, virtual congregational meetings, and online evangelistic follow-up. More people are hearing the good news than ever before! The gospel IS being preached!

Reaching Jewish people, and Israelis in particular, may have become even more effective during the pandemic. As the harsh limitations begin to relax, the focus now must shift to applying the lessons we have learned over the past several months to a post-pandemic world.

There are now more than twenty Chosen People Ministries workers in Israel. In the Holy Land, we are known as Beth Sar

Shalom, the House of the Prince of Peace—a prophetic name for the Messiah found in Isaiah 9:7. We are staffed and led by Israelis because it is so difficult to send (and keep) overseas workers to Israel. This is actually a great advantage!

Some of the staff are based in the Tel Aviv area, others are based in Jerusalem. All of them were affected by Israel’s complete lockdown and strict-but-necessary safety measures that were put in place. Many were confined to their homes. Others were out of the country and could not return.

Jason, one of our staff members in Israel, has served diligently throughout the pandemic. He recently summarized the adjustments in ministry as a result.

In 2017, we opened the Ramat Gan Messianic Center with great expectation that we would bring the gospel, in love, to the people of the greater Tel Aviv area. Our ministry was growing, slowly, and steadily. Hundreds of non-believers came into our center, and many commented on our warm hospitality compared to the bitter opposition that often stood outside protesting our events. We became accustomed to holding many activities every week, such as worship nights, outreach concerts, special events for the Jewish holidays, classes, and many other activities. Then the virus struck.

When the pandemic hit in March, we looked for ways to continue to meet people’s needs, just like we always have. We moved many of our activities online right away. In some cases, we helped people overcome feelings of loneliness because we were actively reaching out through virtual events and private follow-up.

However, now that things have started to open up, although we are continuing with our virtual events, most ministries are seeing a steady decline in attendance. Restrictions are slowly being lifted, which is enabling people to get outside, enter parks, and resume other activities. We continue adjusting to the weekly changes and are still actively calling people, inviting them to our virtual events and making ourselves available to talk.

Right now, there is also a rising fear that a second wave of coronavirus is coming. At the end of May, there were only around a dozen or fewer new cases a day. As June began, however, that number rose to almost two hundred infections a day. Israel is still doing very well, all things considered. We have a lot to be grateful for, and of course, we are praying that a second wave will not come.

There is no way to know what the future holds. The very best outcome is that, in our perseverance through this trial, we will be ready for whatever the Lord will bring next. James wrote it this way: “And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing” (James 1:4). This is what we can count as joy while we endure.

Robin, another staff member working in Israel, relates a similar story.

When the lockdown first started in Israel, we did not realize how long it would last. Our Ramat Gan Messianic Center (near Tel Aviv) has so many vibrant ministries happening. We were holding Bible studies, women’s events, Sabbath dinners, music outreach nights, story times for children, English classes, and so much more. When we could no longer continue these outreaches in person, we assessed which of these things we would continue via Zoom.

The first week that we moved the Bible study and women’s Bible study online, it had doubled and tripled its usual attendance. We realized people are home, desiring community. We started hosting meetings more frequently. Our staff team also met weekly on Zoom to pray and make sure someone was connecting more personally with each member of our community.

I met weekly on FaceTime with an elderly woman who is a believer and her

friend who is not. We had wonderful conversations that were always sprinkled with testimonies, and the calls ended with prayer. There were many opportunities like this. People who do not usually want to hear about Jesus or pray were more open.

We hosted two online worship nights with Israeli worship leaders, and people watched from Israel, the United States, and all over the world.

Some of our staff in Jerusalem, Haifa, and Tel Aviv were able to deliver food packages to Holocaust survivors during this time, as well. Staff also organized calls, video events, and other ways to help those who were home alone feel less lonely.

Some staff have put more time into following up with people who respond to our online outreaches. Great spiritual conversations are happening.

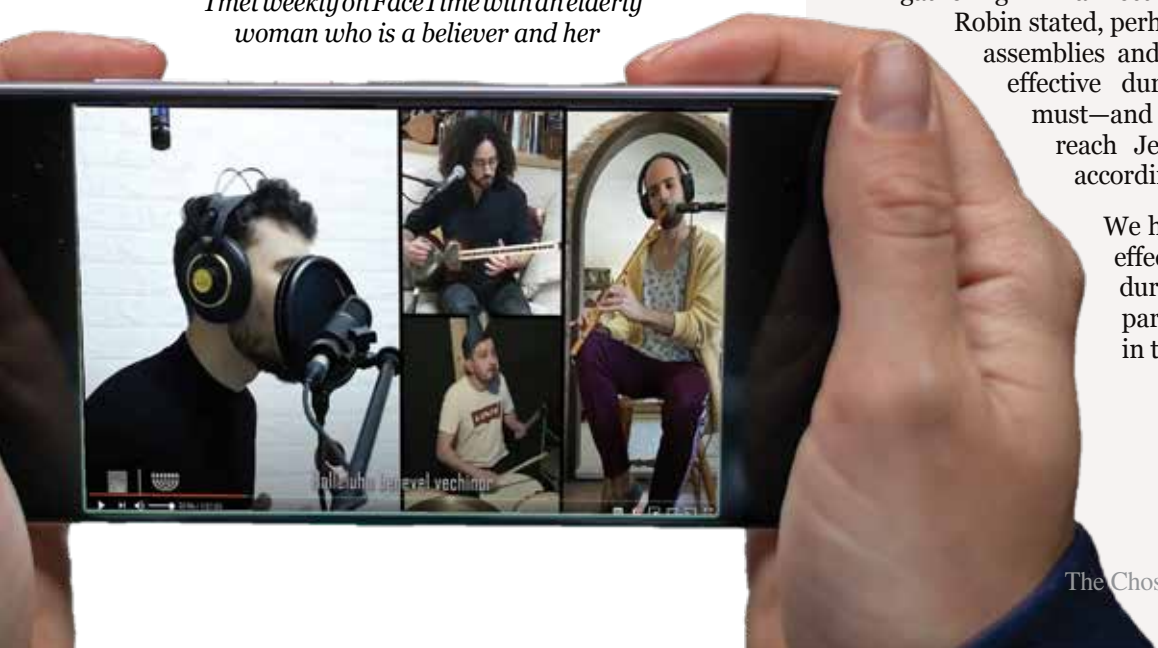
During Passover, we invited those at home alone to join us by Zoom for a virtual Seder. It was actually really fun! I took my iPad outside on the balcony to sing with the city. Because people were unable to gather together, the government encouraged everyone to sing on the balcony at a set time so those who were alone would hear and be part of the community.

Recently, the numbers of those attending our online activities are down, now that stores and some workplaces have begun to open. We still cannot begin meetings in person due to the restrictions, but maybe it is for the best. There has been a spike in coronavirus cases, mostly in schools and from public transportation, and those numbers are rising.

The government is slowly taking the next steps toward reopening. While we continue to meet online, we can also now meet with a couple of people outdoors as long as we follow social distancing guidelines. We are praying for wisdom and creativity to reach people in this next season. We are less restricted than we were, but we have not quite achieved a “new normal” yet.

It is impossible to say what the new normal will look like. Masks, social distancing, and limited numbers of people gathering will almost certainly play a part. But, as Robin stated, perhaps that is for the best. Smaller assemblies and digital interaction have been effective during this pandemic, and we must—and will—adapt our strategies to reach Jewish people with the gospel accordingly.

We hope and pray that the new and effective strategies we discovered during the darker times will become part of our array of ministry tools in the light!





PSALM 23

“Adonai Roi,” The Lord Is My Shepherd

Despite the fact that many pillars of our faith—Abraham, Moses, and David to name a few—were shepherds, shepherding is not currently one of the most popular professions. Parents do not lie in bed at night saying, “Oh, how I hope my child comes to me one day and says, ‘Mom, Dad, I know what I want to be when I grow up. I want to be a shepherd.’”

Throughout the Scriptures—in both the Old and New Covenants—God uses shepherding to illustrate His relationship with us. Our relationship with God is not horizontal; it is vertical. We do not ascend to Him as if to become gods. Rather, it is a matter of Him coming down to us. What a great act of humility! The creator of the universe is concerned for us: a stubborn, stiff-necked, and rebellious people (Romans 5:8, Psalm 8:4). Just as a shepherd lovingly takes care of his sheep, lowering himself to them, our Lord also comes down to our level to care for us.

When we say, “The Lord is my shepherd” (Psalm 23), we acknowledge that we are His sheep, but saying it is not enough; our lives must reflect it. As we understand the relationship of a shepherd to his sheep, we can better understand God’s relationship with us. The problem is that very few of us have any idea about the actual role of a shepherd. Grasping what a good shepherd does for his sheep—what it means for the Lord Himself to be willing to be our shepherd—will give us a deeper appreciation for how the Lord cares for us.

Do you acknowledge your belonging to Him? Are you willing to recognize that everything you have and everything you have ever worked for belongs to God? You are His steward, managing things for Him. Viewed through a worldly lens, this may seem like an unfavorable situation. The world tempts us to say, “It is all mine; I am not

anyone’s slave; I am free.” But that is what this is all about. The way sheep belong to a shepherd, God owns us and we must acknowledge that.

In Psalm 100:3, the psalmist wrote, “*Know that the Lord Himself is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture.*” God bought us with a price; He has redeemed us. In Acts 20:28, Paul gave a charge to the elders saying, “*Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.*”

The Scriptures teach that true wholeness is achieved by surrendering to God’s control of everything in our lives. Everything we have is His; He is in charge. However, psychologists and psychiatrists in the secular world often aim to guide their clients to stand in their own strength, assert themselves, and be subject to no one. They would say that self-reliance is the road to wholeness.

If we cannot submit to God’s authority, we will never have true peace and contentment. Everything would depend upon our circumstances, which are continually changing. By acknowledging that the Lord is our shepherd and by accepting His authority in our lives, we can find true freedom and fulfillment. With genuine gratitude and exaltation, we can proclaim as David did, “*The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.*” I lack nothing and have everything that I need because the Lord provides it all.

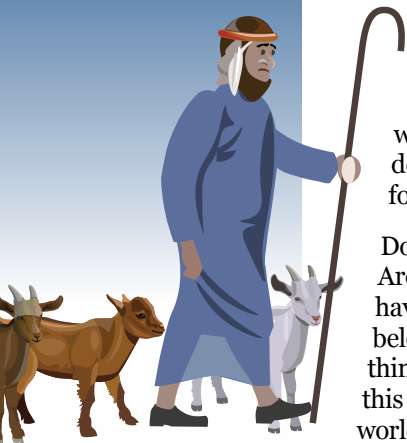
During Passover, one of my favorite songs sung at the *Seder* is “Dayenu.” In the song, after describing each miracle God performed, the word *dayenu* is sung. It means, “It would have been enough for us.” When looking at Psalm 23:1, “dayenu” would be an appropriate addition; we can say without hesitation, “Adonai Roi, the Lord is my shepherd, and that is enough. Dayenu.”

PSALM 23 NASB

¹The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. ²He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. ³He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness For His name’s sake. ⁴Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. ⁵You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You have anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows. ⁶Surely goodness and loving kindness will follow me all the days of my life, And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.



Dr. Rich Freeman, D. Min., serves as the vice president for Church Ministries and Conferences with Chosen People Ministries and lives in South Florida with his wife, Julia.





BALCONY EVANGELISM IN ISRAEL

Robin, one of our staff members in Israel, lives in a small walk-up building with a flat and enclosed roof. She has been escaping to her roof to stretch and get some fresh air. It overlooks, at a safe distance, her neighbor's rooftop. Robin's neighbors, Gili* and Avishai,* are Israelis who lived in New York City for one year, and just one block from where Robin formerly lived. They recognized each other when they moved into Robin's building in Tel Aviv. Now, they are having regular discussions—rooftop to balcony. With more time at home, it did not take long for the dialogue to get more and more spiritual. Gili and Avishai knew about Robin's faith from previous conversations, and now that they have more down time, they began asking more about her faith. The questions continue each time Robin sees them. The couple seems quite open and curious. Please pray that Gili and Avishai would come to know Jesus in a personal way and that the Lord directs Robin's words.

JEWISH WOMAN CONTINUES LIFELONG JOURNEY OF FAITH

Many of our staff members have been calling those who requested a copy of *Isaiah 53 Explained* online. Recently, Janet had a memorable conversation with Beth,* a Jewish woman who returned her call. They had a long discussion about spiritual matters and began to get to know one another. Although Beth does not attend synagogue regularly, she did when she was growing up. She is quite literate and has been seeking God for decades. Beth shared two anecdotes with Janet about attempted conversations as a young girl with rabbis about Jesus. One rabbi got upset with her and refused to discuss the matter. Beth approached a second rabbi at her childhood synagogue, and this time she heard a different response. *The second rabbi told her that he believed Jesus was the sacrifice for our sins, but he could not talk about it or he would be ostracized.* Beth and Janet talked about how God gave them prophets who called His people to turn back to Him. Janet shared Isaiah 53, and after discussing the passage, Beth agreed with Janet to pray for God to show her the truth about Jesus. Beth also agreed to participate in future Bible studies about Messianic prophecy. After the phone call ended, Beth texted, saying how she was grateful for Janet's call and that she was looking forward to future studies. However, Janet has not heard back from her, and is concerned that Beth may have been influenced not to pursue Jesus. Please pray for Beth.

MINISTRY IN SOUTH AMERICA REACHES INTO CHILE!

Chosen People Ministries—Argentina has been actively sharing the gospel during this time. During Passover, they hosted Messiah in the Passover demonstrations online. Through digital posting and daily broadcasts, our Argentina staff met with Jewish people—many of whom are unclear about their faith—and with Gentiles who have Jewish friends with whom they want to share the gospel. They also connected with a Messianic Jewish congregation in Chile that expressed interest in partnership. This congregation wants to share the gospel with Jewish people in Chile who do not attend synagogue regularly. Through the resources of Chosen People Ministries, Jewish people in Chile can be introduced to Yeshua from a Jewish perspective. The Internet has become an invaluable tool for reaching Jewish people throughout the world. We recently had a group of Spanish-speaking Jews in Russia who listened to our messages! People from several other countries, as well as other provinces in Argentina, are connecting with our staff members. The Lord continues His work in Argentina, albeit in a different way!

**Names changed*



Buenos Aires, Argentina

“I was searching for a way to give

my God more than just words. He is everything to me. His love is all that is worth living for. I would tell him, ‘I love you!’ often. All I can do is love him. I was reminded of the widow’s mite (Luke 21:1-4). He acknowledged the widow’s gift not because of how much she gave, but how much she had left—just her love for Him.

She gave all she had. He loved her love for him. And that was enough. I understood that my sacrifice did not have to prove my love, just reveal it.

In loving my Messiah, I have always loved His people, the children of Abraham. My Messiah is Jewish; He came to His people first. His word tells us that “salvation is of the Jews,” and through them, the whole world is blessed. The Lord moved me

to give to bless His chosen people.

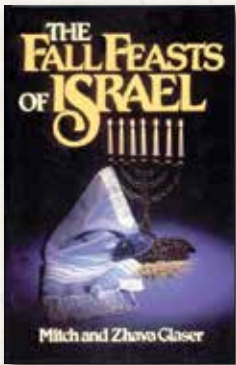
When I finished sending my gift, I sat down in a quiet place and experienced the greatest moment of joy I had ever had in my life. His beloved Holy Spirit so filled me that I could feel light coming from within. My soul was satisfied that, by His grace, my spoken expression had been verified and accepted by my Lord in an act of love. How great is our God and how we love Him.”

Like Hannah, you, too, have personal stories of how your sacrificial gifts have made a difference in the ministries you support, and the joy it has brought you. Such types of gifts have made a tremendous impact on Your Mission to the Jewish People.

Unexpected Joy in Sacrificial Giving



IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT HOW YOUR GIVING CAN IMPACT OUR PROGRAMS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD, PLEASE CONTACT CINDY FORBES, PARTNERSHIP DIRECTOR, AT (212) 223-2252 OR CFORBES@CHOSENPEOPLE.COM. THANK YOU! GOD BLESS YOU!



Understanding the purpose and traditions of the Jewish feasts will give you a deeper appreciation for your God, your heritage, and the gift of redemption provided by the sacrificial death of Christ. *The Fall Feasts of Israel* will help you understand three of Israel’s most significant festivals: Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Sukkot. A complete examination of each feast includes a look at its biblical institution, its celebration in the time of Christ, and its observances by Jews today. “The feasts and laws of the Lord were a tutor to lead the Israelites to the Savior...the festivals find their fulfillment in Christ and His New Covenant.”

The Fall Feasts of Israel • \$14.95^{US}



We often find it difficult to share the gospel with those whom we do not know well or feel we do not understand. This manual, *How to Introduce Your Jewish Friends to the Messiah*, will help you reach Jewish people with the message of salvation! A must read.

How to Introduce Your Jewish Friends to the Messiah • \$9.95^{US}

Order us in the enclosed card or for phone orders call 1-800-333-4936 in the U.S. For more resources, visit us online at chosenpeople.com/store.



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